

Antehomerica

By

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The troublous war and the awful pain of the Trojans
please speak, oh Calliope, through our many songs.
Sing it and repeat it from the beginning to the end;

since Priam engendered destruction to the Trojans, the accursed Paris, who would cause awful war.	5
About this nothing has been said by the renowned Homer. Speak about the charming face of the Helen from Argos and how Alexander brought her to Troy from Sparta. Speak of the sailing of the Greeks and all their ships.	
Speak about the rancour of the son of Peleus and the destruction of the Achaeans, about the fate of Sarpedon, Patroclus and Hector, about Penthesilea, the daughter matching for men.	10
Speak about the Ethiopian army, the sons of Erigeneia (Eos), about the tearful destiny of Aeacus' descendant.	
Sing about Eurypylus and the descendant of Aeacus, about Helenus' prophecy and Alexander's murder.	15
Speak about Epeius' wooden horse which sacked the city until the huge walls of Troy were completely annihilated. All these, oh Muse, please tell me, you noble daughter of Zeus.	
Troy had suffered from previous wars as well.	20
Wild-hearted Heracles' rage had sacked it. The women run to the forests of Scythia, the Amazons with the crooked bows, daughters of Ares.	
When the mighty conflicts stopped, they were offering each other their own brave blood.	25
The Trojans took deep breaths from the cold war and divided and shared parts of land while in peace. But that did not please the brazen Parcae.	
They would quickly think of something else, more baneful for the Trojans. They would not be happy as long as the Trojans were in peace, until the name of pain would come into existence from the birth of Paris.	30
Parcae prepared, then, strong arrows which would traverse the earth, the sky and the sea. These arrows were permitted by the thoughtful gods of Olympus.	
Saturn and Zeus and Ares and Phoebus Apollo, Aphrodite and Hermes and beautiful Artemis, all the twelve Gods as well as the thirty eight remaining.	35
Then it was the start of the calamity for the Trojans when Hecuba conceived from the king Priam.	
At the beginning she was haunted by air-wandering dreams.	40
She saw in her dreams she would give birth to a fiery beast who would set fire to the Trojan cities and to Troy itself. Prophets, who tried to explain the dream, have said.	
You're holding in your belly, Hecuba, a child that will bring disaster to Troy. That's precisely what the prophets had said.	45
Then, Hecuba gave birth to a child who would bring disaster to Troy. She named him Paris, although she shouldn't have brought him to this world. Then, fearing for his family Priam took the child and brought him to the altar of Helios to consult the oracle.	

There was the excellent prophet for the Trojans, Apollo, 50
in the most holly temple of the Helios, who brings light to the mortals.
According to the prophecy, he said the following oracle.
Go, tell my word, the word of Phoebus, you, leader of the Trojans!
Because of Paris, your new-born baby son,
the city of Troy will be utterly destroyed by the suffering-bringer Ares, 55
when your son will complete his thirtieth year of life.
After king Priam heard this,
he sent his son to the fields to grow up by himself.
He even built Parium, in honour of his son Paris.
His son would grow up in that place learning about everything 60
the offspring of noble kings should learn.
Many writers have written lots of tales.
In one of them, there was the goddess of desire Aphrodite
along with Athena and Hera; who was the best was debated.
This story sounds better to me than any other. 65
As the wise men have written, since the beginning of the world,
from Chaos and Erebus, the first to appear were
Peleus, whom earth brought into existence, and Thetis by the sea.
There were Hera the fiery and Athena the breadth of air.
Along with them there was the friendly golden Aphrodite. 70
Eris sent an apple as a contest prize.
The lovely Aphrodite won [the contest against] the others.
She won the prize and is holding it since then.
For that Eris showed up at the wedding.
Because of that Priam's son was living in Parium. 75
After this, thirty years had passed.
Finally Priam and the glorious Trojan tribes
brought Paris back to Troy from Parium.
They were foolish; they didn't realise they were bringing their own catastrophe.
It was the Xanthicus month when they brought him into the city. 80
Xanthicus is the month the Greeks call April.
He arrived on the twenty second day.
He was glad to meet his parents and his brothers in the city.
He made sacrifices to the renowned ancestral gods
of whom to the beautiful-skinned Erigeneia he offered seven or eight bulls. 85
Afterwards, on the fifty-seventh day,
on the eighteenth of June,
his father sent him to the city of Argos
to make sacrifices to the temple of Apollo in order to keep the evil away.
He sent with him a hundred of men and many beautiful gifts. 90
He also gave him letters to bring to the Argive kings,
so they could be allies and make sacrifices together.
Priam was afraid he would become like Ganymedes who had suffered a lot
by the monarch Tantalus, the noble king.
That's why he sent with Paris men, letters and gifts. 95
They sailed the salty water of the sea of Poseidon
and the fair wind of Zeus brought them safe to Sparta.

There, they were received by the blond Menelaus in his palace.
 Menelaus welcomed the beautiful gifts he was given
 and left for Crete to make sacrifices to the ancestral Zeus. 100
 A shiny star was leading the king to Crete.
 All the previous kings were called divine.
 That's why the beautiful star had been following the sceptre of Zeus.
 There was a constellation next to the Nemean lion
 of five stars; the most royal of all, 105
 Zeus, showed himself among the rays of the sun.
 Menelaus sailed to Crete to perform sacrifices for his forefathers.
 He had left in his palace Alexander with his companions,
 who during the evening meal met Menelaus' wife.
 She was passing through the garden along with her maiden slaves; 110
 her beauty was astonishing and glittering and charming;
 Paris was hit, then, by the Eros' burning arrows.
 And it was well received. The same arrows hit her as well.
 Both of them fell in love with each other's beautiful face.
 She was white, with soft skin and beautiful eyebrows and nose. 115
 Her skin was so white and bright as if it was made of snow.
 She had lovely breasts and a pretty face;
 she had languishing and large eyes and a melodious charming voice;
 she had long, curly, blond hair;
 she was well-behaved and perfect in everything she did; 120
 she was a lot more beautiful than all the other women,
 just like the moon is brighter than all the stars in the sky.
 At that time she was twenty six years old.
 Such was the beauty of the daughter of Tyndareus.
 Paris, on the other hand, had his beauty from the Graces. 125
 He was white, of a proper age, charming and well-bearded;
 he had his hair long and blond.
 This is how was the man who fell in love and was loved back as well.

When they made their love known to each other,
 at Aethra's suggestion and other maidens' as well, 130
 they put these slaves on their ships along with their decoration.
 Aethra, the willy one, accompanied them
 and headed to the unharvest sea of Tyre
 because they were afraid to sail directly to Troy.
 Immediately, messengers from home arrived to Menelaus in Crete 135
 to tell him the news; he left as quickly as possible
 overcoming the uncontrollable waves of Apollo.
 He suffered a lot chasing them in vain.
 They had passed through the Tyrian sea.
 They finally saw the city of Troy after having suffered for a year. 140
 All the Trojan men and women looked at Helen
 and were astonished by her beautifully sparkling face.
 Hecuba welcomed her warmly and invited her to the palace.
 Many say that Alexander the king

came to Sparta after leaving Troy 145
 so he can take Helen from Sparta to Troy.
 Others, although, say it differently according to their own preferences.
 They don't agree that Helen was beside the Trojans
 but, instead, she had gone to the palace of Proteus.
 So the Argive army fought the Trojans in vain. 150
 Many claim to tell History by misrepresenting it.
 However, I have written these having my words precise,
 that they are truly facts; everything else is useless.

The fact that Helen the Argive was with the Trojans had become known
 to Menelaus, the son of Atreus, and to Odysseus and Palamedes 155
 and Acamas, the son of Theseus, and to the divine Diomedes.
 They sent ambassadors to Troy requesting immediately the woman.
 But, because of the malignant Antimachus' actions,
 the best men of the Argives failed in their mission.
 Antimachus had been bribed with gold by Alexander. 160
 Antenor, though, had hosted them, which later would save him from death.
 Until the sack of Troy, both sides would exchange gifts.
 Those who would be saved, had given wealthy gifts.
 They had escaped the reckless actions of Antimachus
 and in their turn, the Argives cursed Troy to suffer the same. 165
 Then, a huge army from the mainland and from the islands
 gathered together and marched against Troy.
 During ten years they tried to conquer the city
 until the daughter of Tyndareus would come out.
 Then, the Achaeans would violently go on board their ships. 170
 Everybody was keeping the oath given to Tyndareus.
 They sailed to Aulis where they prepared the attack against Troy.
 It didn't escape Achilles' notice;
 he had just married and was at his wife's palace
 in Scyros, the island of Dolopes, the city of Lycomedes. 175
 It's been said he was wearing women clothes there.
 Odysseus and Nestor and the divine Palamedes
 were sent to Peleus and Thetis and Cheiron.
 They were exceeding in wisdom and articulate in speech
 and they noticed that Achilles was disguised as a daughter. 180
 The illustrious ambassadors begged him to come with them.
 They finally brought the heart of Achilles to the sons of Atreus and to the Achaeans
 along with fifty ships and the army of the Myrmidons.
 Fifty men were upon each ship.
 Along with him came also Patroclus and Phoenix, the son of Amyntor. 185
 The first one was leading the army, the latter was Achilles advisor.
 The Argives and all the Achaeans rejoiced at their encountering.
 Everybody was cheerful, the army and the prudent kings,
 about the beauty and the actions of the swift-footed Achilles.
 He was the best of all concerning his beauty and his actions. 190
 All the Achaeans had gathered together in Aulis.

There were six thousands one hundred and eighty ships (6,180).
 Wintry winds were blowing at that time.
 Then, Odysseus went to the palace of Clytemnestra
 and deceiving her he took Iphigeneia 195
 to sacrifice her to Artemis, according to the prophecy of the son of Thestor.
 When her father, Agamemnon, saw her, he shed his tears.
 Because of this sacrifice, he was called the leader of the army.
 Thanks to his daughter, the Achaeans sowed through the sea.
 However, a deer replaced her; she was made in that land 200
 priestess of Artemis Tauropolos.
 She was haunting bulls and oxen.
 She even increased the harvest with the moon-light and the moisture.
 Afterwards, she became horned and could drive a chariot.
 The Greeks used to offer sacrifice to this daughter; 205
 she was transformed into a deer and run among the soldiers.
 Selene, then, sent them humid winds,
 according to Zeus' shrewdness, who filled the sky with stars;
 the winds blew fairly driving the Greeks to Troy.

The Argives were sailing against Troy. 210
 They learnt and saw everything inside the leaves of the platanus.
 Iris had shown herself to the Trojans; a bad omen from Ares,
 a long lasting one, was brought to them from the sky.
 The token had come to get them ready for the winter and the war;
 the stars in the sky were shinning as if they were comets. 215

The Trojans realised there were watchers everywhere,
 since the ships of the Argives had come nearby.
 The Trojans marshalled around the tomb of Myrina
 shinning in their armour; they came down to the sea's edge.
 They stood up in the battle and fought the Achaeans' ships. 220
 They were fearlessly fighting each other, not paying attention to prophecies.
 The first one to attack from his own ship was Protesilaus.
 He had a lovely face and courage in his eyes;
 his hair was blond and long; his skin was smooth and dark;
 he was bold, graceful, with beautiful body and beard; 225
 he was vigorous, although much younger than Antilochus;
 his wife Laodameia abandoned her inner chambers
 after exalting her bridal ornaments for a while;
 he hadn't enjoyed her for long, nor her beautiful long hair.

When she heard that her beautiful groom had fallen alongside the ships 230
 in the enemies' hands and drowned in his own blood
 whether Euphorbus killed him, or Achates or the killer Hector;
 She took her bridal ornaments
 and put a sword into her heart while having her eyes wide open;
 the joyless bride went down to Hades; 235
 the beautiful woman lived and died along with her beautiful husband.
 I praise her and with love embrace her,
 just like Euadne, Alcestis and Antiope,

Theano, Oenone and Lucretia
 and the beautiful wife of Abradatus, Panthea, 240
 along with them the stout wife of Brutus, Porcia.
 All of them honoured their husbands and gained a marvellous glory.
 They didn't dishonour their marital beds by planning shameful deeds
 as they do now, the shameless, wild of temper
 Philonome, Phaedra and Stheneboea, who have brought only sorrow. 245

The graceful husband of Laodameia,
 the brave Protesilaus, was the first to get out of his ship.
 He quickly attacked and dismissed the fear of the oracle.
 He would bring victory to his companions with his own death.
 Everyone saw this noble man falling down. 250
 They got out of the ships and started killing the enemy.
 They sank their ships into the bottom of the sea
 and a huge wave aroused from it
 along with a torrent of blood from both sides.
 The Trojans were guarding their city during the night 255
 and fought the Argives running against them.

Cygnus had come from Tenedus in the middle of the night
 and fought on the side of the Trojans against the Achaeans.
 Achilles had killed him as well as many others.

Then the Argives realised it would be more profitable 260
 to conquer the villages and the cities around Troy.
 They built plaited huts, all constructed together.
 Many of them remained to finish building the huts,
 while others went to conquer the cities; especially Achilles
 along with the divine Palamedes, a really noble man, 265
 who excelled in wisdom and was perfect in drawing the mortals
 according to their height, their weight and everything else.
 Along with him Achilles and some other Achaeans
 threw themselves against the Mysians, against the city of Telephus,
 the son of Heracles, the widely ruling well-born king. 270
 There was a great battle; a lot of Greeks had died,
 the Mysians themselves and many of the Achaeans.
 Even Telephus himself, but also the king Aimus, Ares' son
 were fighting next to Elorus and Actaeus, offspring of the river Istrus.
 The Mysian women were fighting from their own chariots, as well. 275
 The Achaeans would have returned to their huts and their ships,
 had Achilles not struck Telephus in his thigh-bone,
 or had Nireus not killed the unyielding queen,
 Hiera, who was fighting from her chariot and was pierced by a spear.
 She was fighting in front line and she was slaying the Argives 280
 so furiously because Achilles had wounded her husband.
 Both the Mysians and the Argives lamented for her fall.
 Such was the funeral song about her beauty

that Telephus made a peace treaty with Achilles.
She even surpassed Helen in beauty. 285

After making the treaty, the Achaeans went back to their huts.
All the Argives regarded the divine Palamedes with affection
for he was a man of wisdom and of a great knowledge.
Those who were homesick for their beloved homeland,
were relieved by playing draughts, so they could drive away the sorrow. 290
He even foretold the sicknesses and how to overcome them,
including the medicinal remedies and what to eat they were told.
For he was a foreteller for every sign and omen,
he quickly could become a beloved friend to all;
he was not arrogant at all nor had he acted recklessly; 295
this is why all the Achaean nations treated him affectionately.

Odysseus, the pestilent fellow of the heroes, the hate of the noble men,
(he had abandoned Philoctetes in Lemnos, taking away his ships;
he, also, killed Ajax the great later as he was furious,
as well as Ajax the Locrian whom he had drowned; that's why he left 300
alone of all the Achaeans;) he hated the man
whose dignity was undoubtedly not equal to Odysseus'.
He had brought disaster with his subtlety of mind
and provoked Achilles' anger against the Argives;
he, also, brought the grievous plague upon the Achaean soldiers. 305
The reason for all these, as I have said, what else would it be if not his hate.
I shouldn't make remembrance of the Odysseus' plough
nor that of Telemachus; all these have been just lies.
It was him, Odysseus, who gathered all the Greek noblemen.
I am saying this unerringly, just like the way it happened. 310

The Argives had sailed through the sea waves of Argos
and when they reached Troy, many signs were visible,
such as the much-flaming thunderbolts and the really strong thunders,
as well as comets and rainbows and a solar eclipse.
This shuddered the hearts of all the Achaeans. 315
Palamedes himself drove everyone's fear away
by saying that this is a bad omen not for the Argives but for the Trojans.
Now everybody saw this omen differently.
Referring to this, a diviner reassured it was true.
Furthermore, Palamedes invented the draughts and the letters for the Achaeans. 320
The divine Achaeans, then, glorified him even more.
That is why Odysseus' heart was burning more and more.

When they were returning to their huts from Mysia,
because Telephus had made a peace treaty with the other leaders of the army,
wolves had come from the mountains to the huts of the Achaeans 325
and stole their women slaves and their mules. Then Odysseus,
because he wanted in his heart to be better than Palamedes,
he went shouting in the mountain to catch the wild beasts;
he took with him many of the Achaean archers;

The fool! He didn't understand it was an omen for the plague. 330
 When Palamedes saw them, he smiled at them and spoke like this.

You, wise Odysseus, and you, brave archer-men!
 Why are you so recklessly chasing these wolves?
 You fool! The wolves are not new in these mountains; they have been there before.
 Has any of them ever hurt the Argives before? 335
 This is an omen for the plague; put away the arrows and the bows.
 Shall we leave the rush of the plague in these fields.
 Do not taste any meat and let's go back to the sea.

That's how he spoke; everyone did as he said.
 Only Odysseus did not respect him and talked scurrilously. 340
 Right afterwards, the plague was upon the Trojan cities,
 while the Achaeans managed to escape unharmed.
 Then, Palamedes was viewed by all just like a god.

The hateful man, whose heart had dark intentions,
 killed Palamedes; Odysseus' mind was full of wiliness. 345
 Palamedes had sacked many Trojan cities
 side by side with Achilles; they had conquered twenty three cities.
 The treasures founded there were handed to the Achaeans,
 along with many women, such as Astynome, the daughter of Chryses.
 Achilles was given Hippodameia, the daughter of Briseus, 350
 whom he kept for himself among the other Achaeans.
 But now listen to what these beautiful girls looked like.

Chriseis was very young and thin, with milky skin.
 She had blond hair and small breasts; she was nineteen years old;
 she was still a virgin. Briseis Hippodameia 355
 was tall and white, her hair was black and curly;
 she had beautiful breasts and cheeks and nose; she was, also, well-behaved;
 her smile was bright, her eyebrows big;
 she was the wife of Mynes, Leleges' king;
 she was twenty-one years old when she was brought 360
 to Aeacus' descendant, away from the other Achaeans.
 It was difficult for them to handle her to Achilles.

Odysseus spoke then to the king, the son of Atreus.
 You are not aware of Palamedes' actions.
 He is depriving you of your sceptre and is giving it to Achilles. 365
 But, please, keep on reigning! Palamedes has to die.

The baleful man had spoken; his wish was gratified.
 They captured a Trojan man who wrote a letter, as he was ordered,
 as if it was Priam who wrote it to his beloved Palamedes.
 After writing it, they put it in Palamedes' bed. 370
 They had deceived with presents the slave of the good Palamedes.
 They brought him, consequently, next to the huts from Lesbos,
 in order to find an effective way to destroy the city.

They firstly separated him from the great-hearted Achilles.
This is how he replied to the sons of Atreus. 375

If you are looking for a way in order to destroy the city, you, son of Atreus,
here there are the two Ajax, the city destroyers.
But if you need from my hands some other solution
in order to conquer Troy, I am at your disposal.

He spoke like that, but he didn't know what they had prepared for him. 380
At that moment, they brought out the fraudulent letter.
They tied him with a rope as Greece's betrayer.

The Mycenaeans killed him as well as the Cephallenians
by hitting him with stones; while he was groaning, he declared the following.
Farewell, you glorious Truth! Your death has been quicker than mine. 385

Palamedes died and the other Achaeans were lamenting,
quietly, though, for they were afraid of Agamemnon's anger,
who didn't permit to honour him with funeral rites nor to shed tears for him.
Palamedes would remain unburied and unlamented.

Ajax then found out that his companion had passed away. 390

Their homelands were near to each other, Salamis and Euboea.

He lamented a lot and dragged a sword into his thigh.

He passed among the Achaeans and scattered all his arrows.

He cried more dolefully and fell next to the dead body;

he plucked out his hair from the roots dragging it with all his might; 395

He honoured his beloved with funeral rites and cried for him against the kings' will.

Shall I describe, now, how this man looked like.

He was tall, white, with his hair blond and filthy;

he was slim and had a long face; he was a servant of wisdom and of Ares.

His hair was blond and visibly dirty, 400

because he didn't trouble himself with stupidities like his hair;

he always fell to sleep lying into the dust,

always thinking about the war, about ambushes and phalanxes,

about the soldiers that followed him, how could each of them be safe.

These things were more important in his mind than his hair. 405

This man was killed by Odysseus and buried with due honours by Ajax.

The end of Antehomerica of Tzetzes